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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MEDIA THEMES, SEPTEMBER 26 TO OCTOBER 2:
SIX MORE YEARS! - MUBARAK INAUGURATED FOR FIFTH TERM;
SIMPSONS COMING TO TOWN

1. Summary: President Mubarak's September 27 inauguration was carried on live TV and followed over the course of the week by coverage and paeans of praise. At the same time, several leading columnists advocated that President Mubarak and the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) stick to their campaign promises. U/S Karen Hughes' September 25 - 26 visit to Cairo was covered widely. News reports of her visit were straight-forward and TV images and print media photos showed her interacting with government officials and Cairenes. Commentary about her visit was critical, however. One person wrote in a pro-government newspaper that U/S Hughes was "a smart and intelligent woman," but would "fail because U.S. policy is based on double standards." Egypt's newsstands saw another independent weekly newspaper appear, Al-Karama ("Dignity"), on September 27. The newspaper's editors and publishers are Nasserites who are critical of a "hereditary regime" in Egypt, as well as U.S. policy. Finally, beginning in Ramadan, Saudi-owned satellite channel MBC will begin airing episodes of "The Simpsons" dubbed in Arabic, with an Egyptian actor doing the voice of Homer Simpson, renamed "Omar" in the Arabic version. End summary.

2. Mubarak inauguration: Egyptian TV devoted live coverage to President Mubarak's September 27 inauguration for a fifth term of six years. The following day, all major newspapers highlighted quotes from his inaugural address, among them the promise that "this election was not the end. What is important now is to carry out the aspirations of the people and march forward. We will do this with determination to pursue further reform." Most commentators in the pro-government press, as expected, praised Mubarak's speech. However, several prominent commentators, among them pro-government Al-Ahram's (circulation: 750,000) Editor-in-chief Osama Saraya, urged the NDP to "increase government transparency and political reform."

3. U/S Karen Hughes visit to Cairo: Egyptian print and TV news coverage of U/S Karen Hughes September 25 - 26 visit to Cairo was straight forward with images showing U/S Hughes with Egyptian political and religious leaders, and a child, during her visit to old Islamic Cairo. Local commentary was universally critical of the purpose of her visit. Popular independent columnist Salama A. Salama summed up what many moderate columnists wrote on September 29 in an Al-Ahram editorial: "What the U.S. should be doing is changing policy, not dressing it up to look better. Even if Hughes has the sympathetic ear of our leaders, the Arab public will remain skeptical." Salama then proceeded to list the following complaints about U.S. policy: "failure to lift a finger" to link Israel's Gaza withdrawal to the Roadmap; "isolating" Syria by blaming it for Hariri's assassination; the "harassment of millions of Muslims" in the U.S.; and the "abuse" of prisoners at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. A columnist in pro-government Al-Gomhouriya (circulation: 500,000) wrote on September 29 that despite "U.S. show-business techniques" promoting "good Americans," the prevailing image of the U.S. is of the violent "cowboy." Another columnist wrote in Al-Gomhouriya the following day that "while Karen Hughes is a smart and intelligent woman and has conveyed good messages from the U.S., her efforts will fail because of U.S. policy based on double standards." A commentator in opposition daily Al-Wafd (circulation: 50,000) wrote on October 1 that U/S Hughes had "failed to improve the image of the U.S.," with the writer referring to "America's ugly face" and its "crimes" in Iraq.

4. Al-Karama newspaper: Another weekly newspaper has appeared on Egypt's news stands, Al-Karama ("Dignity"). The newspaper is linked to opposition politician Hamdeen Sabahi, who plans to run in this November's parliamentary elections under a new party, also to be called "Al-Karama." The first edition appeared on September 26, declaring war on "hereditary power in Egypt," ostensibly referring to widespread rumored that Gamal Mubarak will be installed as his father's successor. Several PA contacts reported that it took close to ten years for the newspaper's editors and publishers to receive government permission to publish. In addition to being anti-government and Nasserite in its opinions, the newspaper sharply criticizes U.S. policy.

5. The Simpsons come to town: Several Egyptian online news sources reported last week that the U.S. television series

"The Simpsons" would debut in the Arab world on Saudi-owned satellite channel MBC. The show will premier under the name "Al-Shamshoon" and be dubbed in Egyptian Arabic during Ramadan. Egyptian actor Mohamed Heneidi will do the voice of Homer Simpson, renamed "Omar" for the Arabic version.

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